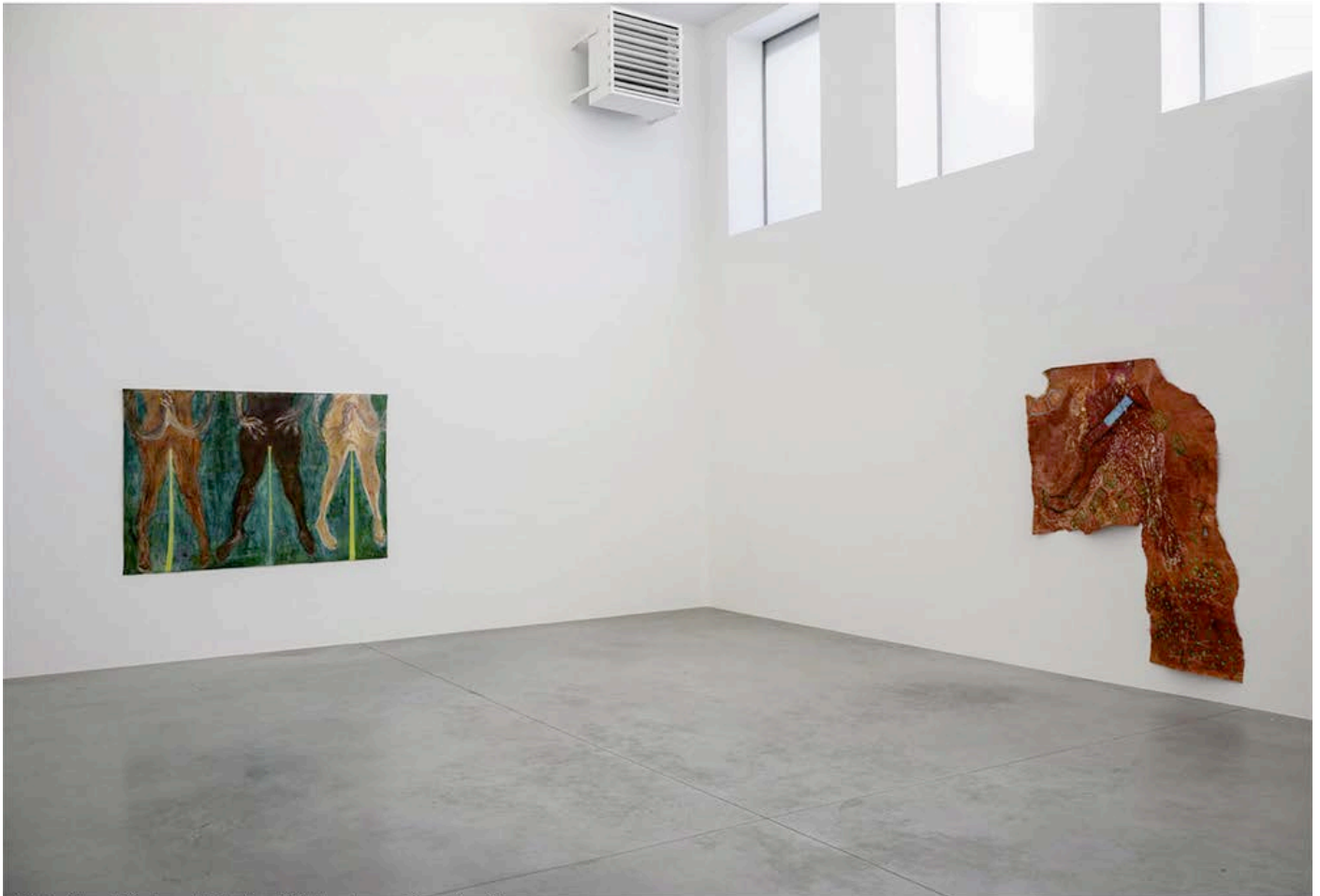


'Pélagie Gbaguidi, 'Le jour se lève' at Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp'. www.mousse magazine.it, 24 May 2022.

Pélagie Gbaguidi "Le jour se lève" at Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp



Pélagie Gbaguidi "Le jour se lève" at Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp. Photo: Peter Cox

Le jour se lève is Pélagie Gbaguidi's first solo exhibition at Zeno X Gallery. It brings together several series of works. In this first exhibition, the artist presents new paintings as well as works with textiles and drawings. Gbaguidi has been represented by Zeno X Gallery since 2021.

Pélagie Gbaguidi calls herself a contemporary 'griot', which she defines as someone who functions as an intermediary between individual memory and ancestral past. Her work is an anthology of the signs and traces of trauma and is centred on colonial and postcolonial history. She draws attention to the way in which legacies of oppression are circumvented – and thus preserved – in official histories. She aims to reveal the process of forgetting by recontextualizing archives and histories. Her works are not direct representations of a traumatic past but transmit embodied knowledge. The images that Gbaguidi creates – through painting, drawing, performance and installation – seek to escape from binary thinking, archetypes and simplifications.

The paintings in the second room give their name to the title of the exhibition. Gbaguidi began this series by drawing the contours of her own body. She then applied pigment with water to the canvas in an almost performative manner – she also uses certain body parts to apply the paint or pigment to the canvas. The works can be read as an intimate diary, the body functioning both as an archive of information and as a seismograph that registers shocks. The presence of two books in *Double Check* underlines the importance of knowing the different systems of oppression which produce violence, tangible up to this day. The unlawful extraction of raw materials and the ensuing system of precarity are central to several works.

Exchange or barter is an important aspect of Gbaguidi's oeuvre, both physical objects and individual knowledge being exchangeable. *Disconnection* and *Care* were created on a used and swapped sail from Lubumbashi and a flour sack, respectively. During a residency in Morocco, Gbaguidi collaborated with local women who taught her various embroidery techniques while she introduced them to painting. She later mastered the techniques, which in these works resulted in a patchwork of arms and bodies placed on top of each other as if they were drawn.

The drawings entitled *Chaine Humaine* form a chain of hands. They are a continuation of her recent *Care* series, which was shown at the Berlin Biennale in 2020. During her research into the archive of the AfricaMuseum in Tervuren, certain parts of the archive were discarded. Gbaguidi recovered a series of sheets from an encyclopedia on the flora of the Katanga region in the Congo. At the time, botanical research was not carried out to increase the knowledge of the Congolese, but mainly that of the Belgians. Gbaguidi confronts the colonial archive by drawing on the historical sheets of paper, transforming the violence in the process. The drawings show certain aspects of technological revolutions – such as the ubiquity of mobile phones or facial recognition – but also the many migration flows currently taking place. The perforations or holes visible in her drawings and paintings can be interpreted as openings onto another reality, but for the artist they are primarily an act of care.

At Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp
until May 29, 2022